

[William Colley Urton]

[1st?]

SEP 14 1936

INTERVIEW

Georgia B. Redfield 945 words

WILLIAM COOLEY URTON -See Photos

Roswell, New Mexico, Sept. 3, 1936

I was born in Cass County, Missouri, and am the son of W. C. Urton and Maria Worrell Urton, who were married in Missouri in 1875.

When six years of age - in 1884 - my brother and I, Benjamin Worrell Urton, left Missouri and came to New Mexico with our parents, and established a ranch home, in the Cedar Canyon country sixty miles northeast of Roswell. The outfit, a part of the Cass Land and Cattle Company holdings (my father W. G. Urton a stockholder) became widely known as the seven H. L. Ranch.

The branded cattle, ranged from the Texas line South, almost to Las Vegas on the north.

There was no railroad, closer than [150?] miles, until ten years after our coming to that part of New Mexico. C18 - 6/5/41 - N. Mex

In 1894 a part of the Santa Fe Railroad system was completed from Eddy, now Carlsbad, to Roswell.

Library of Congress

I have often wished to express in writing all the different excitements we experienced in this new country of southeastern New Mexico, with its Indian hostilities, cattle thieving, and land and water feuds. All these proved only thrills and joys for us, little lads, but must have been hardships and anxieties for our parents.

When the men bought in a herd of cattle from [Fort?] 2 Griffin, Texas, and turned loose on the grazing lands 3,000 head of two year old heifers, we little fellows joined in the celebration and fun of the cowboys who immediately, on arriving safely with the cattle started a contest to see who could brand the first calf of tho'se born on the trail from Ft. Griffin.

All of us on the ranch, known as the Missouriians, had pretty hard sledding the first few years, tho'ugh we were blessed with plenty of water and good grazing for the stock, except during long drouth periods.

I remember once very soon after arriving at the ranch we were witho'ut supplies. Some one told us there was a wagon load of [jerked?] (dried) buffalo meat, on a trail near by. We bought and ate some, by candlelight. The next morning we found the entire lot of meat alive with hide bugs.

We got our groceries by ox wagon from Las Vegas, 150 miles. Once supplies ordered by mother for Thanksgiving arrived the following April.

The post office was at Fort Sumner. When we could go for mail it was usually old when we received news from back home. Father's mother, sick in Missouri, had been d dead three weeks, before we received the letter saying she was sick.

One time mother was bitten by a mad dog and was taken by buckboard, 60 miles to Roswell, and was sent from there

Library of Congress

"Once on - Friday a messenger was sent to Roswell for Dr. E. H. Skipwith, to attend Brother Ben who had measles. Dr. Skipwith, arriving the following Sunday noon, said he knew the boy would be well or dead so he had taken his time.

Mother must have often been very lonely. Sometimes six months would pass in which she would not see a white woman. She would lose count of time. One time she worked hard all Sunday preparing for the Sabbath which she tho'ught would be the next day and observed the Sabbath on Monday.

"Some members of our family were once stricken with ptomain poisoning, a cowboy happened in and gave his special emergency treatment witho'ut which, some of us might have died.

"For schooling, a district school and teacher were established on the ranch. The teachers and expenses were paid for only three months of school. For the rest of the term it became a private school paid for by my parents, a and parents of children on our ranch and neighboring ranches.

"My brother and I one day saw the first Indian we had ever seen. He was standing stately and silent on a big rock, in the place now known as Romeroville. We got away from there as quickly as we possibly could, and when we 4 had reached a safe distance, brother Ben said - 'Let's go back and shoot that ol' Indian!'

A thrilling sight, one day after Indian uprisings, was 500 Indians with sixteen soldier guards, passing the ranch, the Indians were being changed from one reservation to another.

"In 1889 J. J. Cox on the adjoining ranch died. His ranch and the ranch holdings of some others who grew discouraged were bought and the Cass Land and Cattle Company

Library of Congress

became the largest and most important cattle owners on the Pecos River in New Mexico. The stockholders were J. D. Cooley, Lee Easley and my father, W. G. Urton.

“The name of the ranch was changed from Seven [HL] Bar V.

“There were always a number of cowboys working at the ranch, who were called by new names, selected by them, when they came to the new clean country, where they wished to start with a slate wiped clean. According to the well known tradition of the west, no questions were ever asked at the Bar-V Ranch.

“Some criminals, who came never reformed. For two years “Black Jack” - Tom Ketchem, and his brother Sam (who were two notorious desperadoes) worked on our ranch.

“They stole and were riding Bar-V horses when they robbed a train at Folsom in 1900 or 1901. That was the 5 last train robbed in New Mexico. Sam was shot in an arm and died later of bloodpoison from the wound. “Black Jack” - Tom - had one arm shot off, but was captured, tried, and hanged - his head jerked entirely from his body by a clumsy hangman.

“About forty cowboys were employed at times, and five hundred saddle horses were used by the outfit.

“My father would not keep a dangerous horse. He protected the men in every way he could. In all the time - twenty-seven years - he was in the cattle business, there was never an accident, nor a death among his men.

“We moved to our present home three miles northeast of Roswell in 1900. Mother died there in 1909 and father in [1928?].

“I - W. C. Urton - was married in 1915 to Miss Mamie Spencer. We have one daughter, Frances, born in Roswell in 1920.

Library of Congress

"My brother - Benjamin Worrell, was married in 1909 to Miss Bess James. One son was born to them, whom they named Jason James. Bess James Urton died in 1929. Ben's second marriage to Mrs. Underwood took place in Altus, Oklahoma in 1932." Sources of Information

William Cooley Urton, 3 miles northeast of Roswell

Some dates checked from "First Ranches" - New Mexico Magazine, June, 1936 - Page 47.
(They misspelled name Urton)